

Documents on Diplomacy: Lessons

On the Doorsteps of Neighbors: North American Free Trade Agreement

Standard: I. Culture
 II. Time, Continuity, and Change
 III. People, Places, and Environments
 V. Individuals, Groups, and Institutions
 VI. Power, Authority, and Governance
 VII. Production, Distribution, and Consumption
 VIII. Science, Technology, and Society
 IX. Global Connections
 X. Civic Ideals and Practices

Grade Level: 9–12

Objectives: The student will:

- Explain the purposes of NAFTA
- Identify pros and cons of the trade organization
- Resolve specific issues between the United States and its trade partners
- View NAFTA from the perspectives of its three members

Time: 1-3 class periods

Materials: Documents: **1994** North American Free Trade Agreement (Excerpts)

Resources: *Image: NAFTA Logo*
 Reading: American Trade Principles and Practice
 Section XII: Diplomatic Terms and Historical Events
 Case Study: Mexico and Trucks
 Case Study: Canada and Softwood Lumber
 Cartoon: NAFTA

Exercises: *Mexico vs. United States: Position Paper*
 Canada vs. United States: Position Paper

Procedures:

Setting the Stage

The North American Free Trade Agreement, or NAFTA, is an agreement among the governments of Canada, Mexico, and the United States. It was official on January 1, 1994.

The goal of NAFTA is to eliminate barriers to investment and trade between the United States, Canada, and Mexico. Immediately, the tariffs on more than one-half of all U.S. imports from Mexico was removed, as was the tariff on one-third of U.S. exports to Mexico. Within 10 years, all US-Mexico tariffs were to be eliminated except for some U.S. agricultural exports to Mexico, which would be phased out in 15 years. Most US-Canada trade was already duty free.

Activity 1: Brainstorming and Background

1. Project the image of the NAFTA flag as students enter the room.
2. Ask students to explain the meaning and relevance of the flag. If the name, NAFTA, is not mentioned, supply it and have students contribute what they know about the organization.
3. Provide a brief explanation of the history of NAFTA.
4. Distribute the document, *The North American Free Trade Agreement (Excerpts.)*
5. Have students read the Preamble and create a summary of the purpose of NAFTA. Refer also to the Objectives in Article 102.
6. Discuss the primary goals and objectives of the trade organization.
7. Clarify, if necessary, the concept of free trade. Refer students to or provide the resource, *American Trade Principles and Practice*. Discuss the terms protectionism, liberalization, bilateral trade, multilateral trade. (Terms are defined in *Section XII: Diplomatic Terms & Historical Events.*)

Activity 2: Case Studies: NAFTA in Action

1. Divide students into four (4) groups: Mexico and the United States; Canada and the United States.
2. Prepare folders with recommended articles for each case study OR arrange online access for students to read the articles.
3. Note: The Case Studies are about two arbitration cases resolved according to Chapter 20 of the NAFTA agreement. They reveal the complexities of trade within a regional organization. Chapter 20 provides a procedure for the interstate resolution of disputes over the application and interpretation of the NAFTA.
4. Have students read the information included in each case study. Allow a class period for this research.
5. Each of the groups will prepare the position paper for submission to the Arbitration Board (teacher and/or a small group of students).
6. Allow each group to orally present its position paper.
7. The Arbitration Board may rule first after Mexico and the United States present their cases, followed by the presentations on the second dispute when Canada and the United States are present.

8. Discuss the complexities for resolving a dispute within NAFTA. Ask students for their personal opinions regarding the Trucking and Softwood Lumber disputes.

Activity 3: A Final Analysis

- 1.** Provide students with or project the image of the NAFTA Cartoon.
- 2.** Have students:
 - a.** Identify the symbols in the cartoon.
 - b.** What mood or tone is conveyed?
 - c.** Is the cartoon for or against NAFTA? Or, can this be determined?
 - d.** No caption is displayed with the cartoon. Create a caption.
 - e.** Based on knowledge acquired about NAFTA, write a description of it using the images in the cartoon as focal points. ■